# MAX PEMBERTON'S GREAT SERIAL—BEGINS THIS WEEK!


# CHUMS

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# THE MAN OF SILVER MOUNT

**ADRIFT WITH MURDERERS!**

**Manvilla drew a long knife and threatened me. "Hold your tongue!" he said. "Be careful you do not follow your friend!"**

*(See the Thrilling First Instalment of Max Pemberton's Story.)*

**The Greatest Serial ever Published in a Boys' Paper**

## By MAX PEMBERTON

### FOREWORD

When General Oranza fled from Mexico in the year 1913, he took with him one of the few fast destroyers that unhappy country possessed, and a sum of money approximating to a million sterling. Though every American and European State was warned to look out for the arrest of this splendid robber, he was never taken—nor has been from that day to this.

Was the ship, then, and all that sailed in it, lost upon the high seas, or did another fate overtake this bold adventurer?

It is the purpose of this story to answer that question.

### CHAPTER 1

**How the *Dunbar* went Down**

THE gentlemen at Whitehall have asked me to set down all I know of the man of Silver Mount from the night the *Dunbar* was wrecked until we sailed away from the island again.

So I will begin by telling you that she was a new ship, and had just made her first voyage to Tampico, in the Gulf of Mexico. I was a supernumerary engineer, being sent out by Clairds, of Glasgow, to see that everything went well with her engines upon this trial trip, and being but just over twenty years of age and anxious to see the world, as all boys are, I thought myself fortunate in being chosen for the post.

How little could I foresee then the strange adventure into which my so-called good fortune was about to lead me.

They were happy days, and I enjoyed every one of them. We had a sea like glass all the way to Tampico and fully half-way home again. My shipmates were the best of fellows, who told me a hundred good stories and never regarded me as a landlubber. I went ashore in Mexico and saw strange peoples and places and all that colour and joy of life I had read about in the story-books. Then came the homeward voyage and thoughts of bonnie Scotland and her mountains, and of all I would do before the summer time had gone.

Again I say how little did I foresee the truth.

Now the *Dunbar* was burned at sea, as most people will remember very well. A fire broke out in the forehold eight days after we had left Tampico, and, despite all we could do, it spread and finally took hold of the entire ship. We had a miscellaneous cargo, with a good deal of silver below and all sorts of Mexican geegaws on top, and among these and the wool we carried the thing first began. Never shall I forget that night, when Kit, the cabin-boy, called me at three bells in the middle watch and told me that something was amiss down below, and that the chief engineer wanted me. I knew by the lad's face that it was something serious, and told him as much.

"Why, what's frightening you, Kit, lad? What's the matter?" I asked him. He shivered while he answered me.

"I don't know, Mr. Jessell," says he; "but I think the ship's afire."

"You think the ship's afire? What makes you think that?"

"All the officers are on the bridge and all hands adeck. They haven't called the passengers, but maybe they don't want 'em to know. There's a rare smell of fire, sir, and some of the pumps already working. You're to be pleased to come at once, Mr. Barnes says. He spoke very sharp to me, and he seems angry. Shall I tell him you're coming?"

"This minute," said I, and, jumping from my bunk, I slipped on my heavy serges and my overalls and went out on to the deck.

What a gorgeous night it was!

The moon at its full, shining on a vast waste of the shimmering sea now wholly destitute of ships. In the sky a fleck of white cloud racing eastward; the *Dunbar* herself a great black shape above the waters, from which many a bright light flashed, and from whose funnels a vomit of smoke rose in a black pillar almost straight above us. In a common way this might have been a picture of any summer's night aboard the ship; but I had not taken ten steps before I knew there was a difference. The murmur of voices was everywhere to be heard. Men moved to and fro in the shadows and the moonlight. The captain himself paced the bridge before giving his orders in short, sharp words. There was an unordinary sound from the engine-room—the sound of the fire-pumps working. And all this in contrast to the still sea and the wide heaven and the calm beauty of the night—a contrast which set a man's pulses leaping and compelled him, in spite of himself, to ask what next.

We were doomed, then? Was this truly the last hour of the good ship which had sailed so bravely from Glasgow not six weeks ago?

I could not believe it, yet God knows it was the truth.

Well, I took one look at the sea and the sky and the ship and then went down to the engine-room. There I met Chief Engineer Jenkins, and heard the story from his own lips. He was cool enough—chief engineers always are—but I could see at a glance what he thought of the business, and he did not hesitate to tell me.

"Ship's afire," says he dryly. "I want you to look at the pump gear yonder. It's a new kind of fitment, and we've stuck. Just give it an overhaul, will you? There's no time to lose, my boy, and that's a fact."

I stepped over to the place indicated and began my work at once. There was perfect order in the engine-room, and the greasers were going about as though this were a common night, with nothing unusual to be done.

As for Mr. Jenkins, he came and helped me while I worked, and all the time he whistled as though he were enjoying himself.

"Is it a bad fire?" I ventured to ask him. He stopped whistling to say that it was.

"The old man is looking blue," says he, indicating the captain. "I don't know what there is to burn, but we're burning it. We shall want all the water we can get to cool the passengers, I reckon. Trust Mexicans to sing operas when the limelight's on. Give me the spanner, lad. It's a bit too much for you, isn't it?"

I told him "No," and showed him my strength by starting the nut that was troubling me.

"I'm pretty useful with my hands, thank you," said I. "The pumps should work all right now. Just give 'em a head of water, will you, and let us see."

He did as I asked him, and presently we went up to the deck together to see what was doing. Some of the twelve passengers we carried as supercargo were now awake and in a dreadful state of terror. The captain himself had already been compelled to draw his revolver and to threaten to shoot the first man that touched a boat; while as for the two women among them, they had gone comfortably into hysterics and their heels rattled on the decks.

These people were contemptible enough, and their attitude contrasted strangely with the dignified calm of the men on the fo'c'sle and the bridge. Silent, grim warriors, they were fighting the fire demon with the hearts of lions. And our captain, Mr. Fairley, was the finest figure of them all.

"This is a bad business," says he to my chief. Mr. Jenkins replied that he supposed so.

"We'll have to get a power of water down," he remarked laconically. "There's enough wood among the stuff to fire a city, sir."

"There is that," says the captain; "and wool, moreover. I'm thinking we'd be wiser not to lift the hatches, Mr. Jenkins. Some of these wild fowl here would go raving mad if they knew the truth. The company should know better than to carry such cattle, sir."

"They should indeed, sir. But you don't think the ship is done for?"

"I do indeed, sir. If you doubt me, look at that!"

There was a loud explosion as he spoke, and it seemed to me that the whole of the foredeck was lifted suddenly into the air. So violent was the shock that some of our poor fellows were blown headlong into the sea. The forepart of the ship became instantly a roaring furnace, and the most dreadful cries arose.

Truly had the captain said that the *Dunbar* was done for.

## CHAPTER 2

### We are Cast into the Sea

A MAN does not remember very clearly what he does when there are some five minutes between him and the deep sea under him.

I had, as an adventure-loving boy, imagined many things that might happen to me on the ocean, but never such a thing as that.

There was the ship, which had been a great proud thing five minutes ago, now become a roaring furnace from her bows to her bridge. The poor fellows caught forward were either roasted or they threw themselves into the sea. The Mexicans aft roared like bulls, and in their eagerness to get to the boats drew their knives upon each other. As for our stokers, we had Swedes, niggers and Dutchmen among them, and they were out of hand from the beginning. The officers and the old British seamen alone kept their heads, and coming down to the main deck, began to use their revolvers freely. This quelled the mob for a moment, but the cries and howls of terror I shall not soon forget. They were to be heard even above the roaring of the flames.

Now, my place at fire drill was in one of the lifeboats in the fore part of the ship, and this was already in flames. I spoke to Mr. Jenkins about it as he came down from the bridge, and he told me to get any of my traps that I could and go with him into the launch with the passengers and the chief engineer.

"We'll have the old man with us as well," he said, "and with any luck we shall be picked up before morning. Don't bring the drawing-room piano, and don't forget your jewellery." And with that he went down to his own cabin and I saw him no more. When I returned to the deck, perhaps three minutes afterwards, the ship was standing on her head and the flames blowing down on us like some fiery whirlwind. Without one thought of anything but the peril of the fire, I climbed the bulwarks to which I was clinging and then threw myself headlong into the sea. Then I swam for my very life away from the flaming wreckage, and turning for very breath on my back, at last I heard another great explosion and knew that the *Dunbar* had gone.

How still it was now! What an awful change! The moon still shone on the fretting sea, the fleecy clouds still raced across the azure sky; but the great waste of the waters, the silence, the thought that I was alone there, hundreds of miles from any land, and that death had already touched me with an icy finger, what words could tell of this? Well might I have believed that I should never see my home again; and yet, God knows, hope was in my mind rather than despair. I would fight for it, anyway, said I, and, a human cry coming to me, I perceived for the first time that I was not the only man alive.

I say a cry came to me; and almost instantly I recognised the voice as that of Mr. Barnes, our chief engineer. He was then clinging to a deck raft, upon the other side of which were two of those wretched Mexicans who had made all the trouble. One of them I knew well, a dark-visaged, black-eyed cut-throat who called himself Joseph Manvilla; the other I had seen on the promenade deck, but had never learned his name. Oddly enough, the pair of them seemed quite cool now they were in the water; but directly I approached the raft one of them struck at me, while both declared there was no room. This angered Mr. Barnes, who told me that he would throw the pair of them into the sea if they said another word, and then, helping me up, he asked if I had seen anything of the captain.

"It's a bad business, this," he said. "The ship was too quick for us, and most of the poor people burned where they stood. I thought the captain would have had a chance, being on the bridge. It's a poor thing to say he's gone and this riff-raff saved. He was worth a hundred of them, was old Bob Fairley."

I could not help but laugh, for the Mexicans must have heard and understood every word he said, and they crouched there, glowering and very willing, I am sure, to have thrown him into the sea if they had got half a chance. But they knew their man, for he was as strong as a bull, and I was no featherweight, and I dare say that between us we could have accounted for a dozen of them if it had come to a fair fight. So they just sat and sulked, while our eyes were searching the troubled seas for any poor messmate who should still be alive amidst the wreckage. Alas! we found none, though despairing voices reached us in the darkness and all kind of lumber was tossed up by the waves, to the peril of the wretched raft, which alone stood between us and the fate of our comrades.

It had fallen darker by this time. A fitful wind blew from the westward and the sea rose. From time to time there were bodies washed so close to the raft that the outstretched hand could touch them. We heard no longer the terrible cries of drowning men and women; and, indeed, the wind became too high for that, moaning weirdly about us and sending the spindrift flying in our faces. Fortunately, it was a night of summer, and the cold was not insupportable. I lay close to Mr. Barnes, and he put a tarpaulin cloth, which he must have found upon the raft, about me. The Mexicans, meanwhile, never said a word. A dreary stupor appeared to have overtaken them.

"We must wait for the sun, lad," said Mr. Barnes. "I reckon we are about fifty miles north of the Azores, and we should pick up a ship homeward bound from the Cape. You go to sleep and I will watch these vermin. If there's any luck in the world, the sea should rid us of them by daylight; but there doesn't seem to be, judging by to-night. You go to sleep, Harry, and when I see a good hotel I'll wake you; you have my promise again."

I laughed again, despite the absurdity of it, and tried to do as he told me. One of the few things I had picked up in my cabin when the alarm came was the brandy flask my dear mother insisted upon my taking wherever I went, and indeed it proved a godsend. We had a drink apiece and shared

the rest with the Mexicans. The effect upon them was ridiculous enough. They fawned upon us immediately and begged Mr. Barnes for God's sake to save their lives, though by what means he should do so neither had the wit to say. Their talk disgusted me, and when it stopped I think I must have slept a little. When I awoke the sun was shining in my eyes and Mr. Barnes was speaking of a boat.

Of course, at the first I thought that we had sighted some ship, and that all the excitement was caused by an attempt to hail her. Directly I was awake, however, I perceived that this was not the real reason at all, but that one of the steamer's lifeboats had been discovered, bottom upwards, and that Mr. Barnes had swum away to her and was calling me to come to his assistance. Luckily last night's promise of a gale had not been fulfilled. The wind had dropped again, and the swell was very moderate. So I jumped from the raft without hesitation, and swimming round to the leeward side of the boat, we had little difficulty in righting her. Frail as she was, she seemed like a liner in comparison with the raft. Then, indeed, I began to think that we might be saved after all.

Well, we found the sweeps and the mast in the lifeboat, and all her gear. She must have been one of those in the fore part of the ship, and evidently had overturned when the fo'c'sle hands attempted to launch her. Even her supply of biscuits and water was all right, and all we had to do was to get the wretched Mexicans aboard and set out for the East, where the land or the ships would receive us. In this task Mr. Barnes hesitated for the first time. I could see he was plainly of the mind to leave the "wild men" behind.

"No good will come of it, be sure," said he. "Yet, God knows, Harry, I don't know how to do it."

"And won't do it," I added quickly. "You'd never forgive yourself if you did, Mr. Barnes. No, no; we'll have to take them. I'm not going to believe at this time of the day that you are frightened of any foreign vermin."

He smiled at the idea of it, and getting out the sweeps, we approached the raft and told the fellows they might come aboard. They had thought that we were going to leave them, and no woman would have shown such cowardice.

When we got them aboard they fawned like dogs that have been soundly whipped, and one of them, to Mr. Barnes's great disgust, kissed him upon both cheeks, and nearly upset the boat in doing so. Then, as cunningly, they both pretended that they could not row, and so we two had to sit at the sweeps ourselves, and not a hand did we get from those lazy fellows.

It was just the same when we came to the division of the water and biscuits. Mr. Barnes told us very plainly that we should have to ration ourselves, and that if we did not we should starve unless some ship picked us up quickly.

"The biscuit will last us a week if we go steady," he said. "We ought to make one of the islands in three days if the wind would get up and the sea keep light. But we might be a week if our luck's out, and against that we should provide. I'll count out the stuff on that basis, boys, and you may all take a drink of the water to begin with."

He had found a pannikin in the locker, and he now gave us a good draught of water, of which we were greatly in need. The Mexicans pretended to fall in with his idea, but I could see that they were not over pleased with it, and their manner soon became insolent again. We, however, paid no attention to them, but just sat at our oars and pulled hour after hour, while they were jabbering away in their own tongue and evidently laughing in their sleeves at us. Fortunately, it began to blow a bit freshly about five in the afternoon, and we hoisted the sail and took a good rest. Mr. Barnes gave us our supper an hour later, and telling the Mexicans that they had been idle while we had worked, he doubled our own portions both of the biscuits and the water. You should have seen their faces at that. They were like cats that a dog has cornered.

"No, no," says the man named Manvilla; "share is share alike, señor. It is not our fault that we do not have the art of the rowing. You have your duty to do. Are we not your passengers?"

Mr. Barnes said that he was perfectly aware of that, and that he would do his duty in his own way. When, however, the Mexican became threatening and tried to take the tin from him, he knocked him down out of hand, and for two pins I believe he would have thrown him into the sea. This was the beginning of the trouble. The men sat glowering and muttering, and did not touch the food that was offered to them. They were still talking when it fell dark, and as we could no longer watch their movements I feared every moment that they would draw their knives and spring upon us.

Of course there was no thought of both of us sleeping at one time. I remembered that Mr. Barnes had been awake now almost for twenty-four consecutive hours, and I insisted upon his lying down while I took the tiller and the sail.

"They cannot well come at us," said I, "for the sheets and the mast will be in their way. Make them go forward, and then do you lie down and have a sleep. You must want it badly, Mr. Barnes."

He pretended to make light of it; but I could see that he was very tired, and presently he did as I asked him. Somewhat to my astonishment, the Mexicans went forward without a word, and sat close together in the bows, jabbering away like two monkeys in a cage; while as for Mr. Barnes, he fell asleep in a moment, so tired he was. Thus was I left alone in charge of the long boat, and be sure I kept a pretty sharp look out even in the darkness.

Now, the wind had risen at sundown, as I have told you, and the sea became rather rough about midnight. Just as last night, the great round moon was often obscured by a tangled fleece of cloud, while the spindrift sometimes blew right over us, and would wet a man instantly to the skin. I thought it a terrible lonely night, and many a sad thought came into my head. Yet I would not say that I was actually afraid, my mind running rather upon the distant land and the chance we had of being picked up by some ship that was bound from South America to the Azores.

What kind of a chance was that, and how if it failed us?

We were running fast to the southward, and although we carried rockets aboard, what good would they do us upon a sea which showed no sail to its uttermost horizon? Was my own life to begin and end there, out here upon the mighty Atlantic, all that I had done and hoped to be destroyed by one great wave that should overturn us, or by days of starvation that must be torture to endure?

I looked at the great bowl of the sky and could not believe it. God Almighty bade me not to despair. The myriads of stars did not mock me, but spoke rather of the infinite purpose. I should see my friends and the shore again, I thought, and begin my life anew. And that was a true prophecy, though had I known all I must endure and suffer before I came to Scotland again, then might I have wished that the night had been the end of it, and that I might never see the day again.

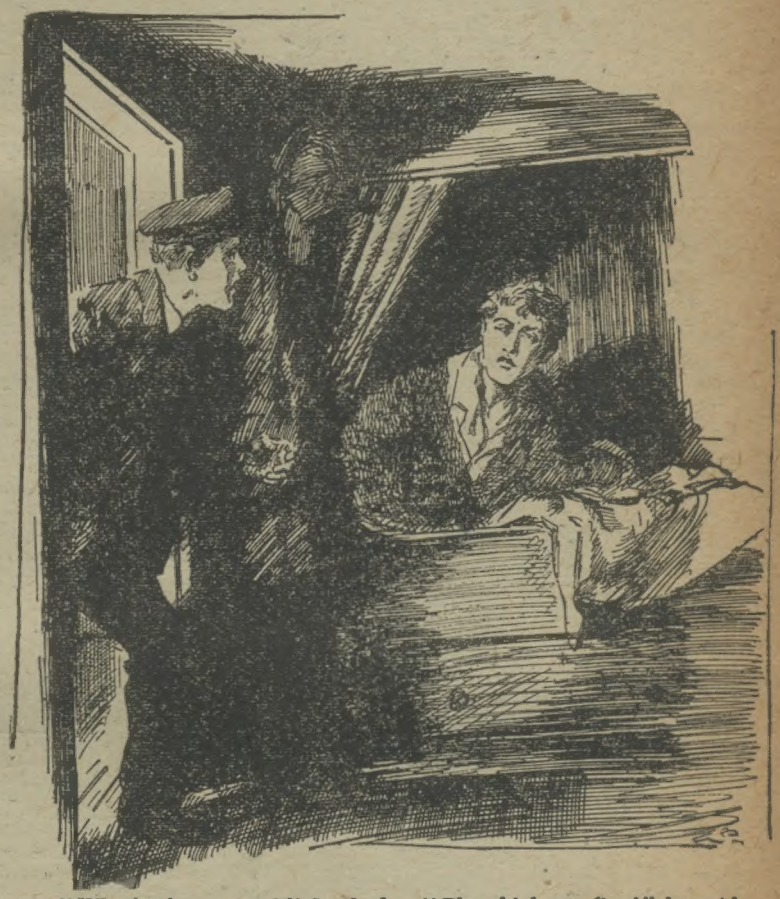
Let me now tell you how all these strange events began.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Phantom Ship

Mr. Barnes slept until near daybreak. I did not wake him, for his need was great. When he relieved me there was a faint glow of light in the east and a shivering, fitful wind from north by west. He told me that I should not have let him sleep so long, and commanded me to "turn in" immediately.

"I'll wake you when we sight a ship," said he; "the others can go on dozing. Look at the cattle. Did man ever see such a brace of cut-throats in an honest longboat before? Why, Harry, their faces should hang them in any decent city."



"What's the matter?" I asked. "The ship's on fire!" he said

I did not demur. The Mexicans were sleeping back to back and snoring like pigs. Even the spindrift flying across the bows did not disturb them, and I could have laughed to think that I had been anxious about them. Presently I was fast asleep myself, and dreaming about them. I thought that they were crawling down upon me, but that their eyes were still shut. Then I woke up all in a sweat of fear and saw them, not in the bows where they had been, but sitting in the stern sheets, drinking heavily from the pannikin.

And Mr. Barnes was no longer in the boat.

We take things in slowly when we are awakened from the sleep that attends great fatigue. For a few moments I did not in any way realise what had happened. There was the scene now become familiar—the heaving lifeboat, the stiff canvas of the sail, the sweeps, the sheets, and the open locker. There also were the sun-tanned faces of the Mexicans, their brown necks, their skinny arms. But my shipmate, that fine figure of a man

in whom all my trust had been, where was he?

"Mr. Barnes! Mr. Barnes!" I cried. The men turned at the words and laughed in my face.

I tried to stand up, but the motion of the boat threw me down again, and the man named Manvilla drew a long knife from its sheath and threatened me.

"Hold your tongue," says he, in much better English than he had spoken to Mr. Barnes. "Your friend has gone to find a ship; he will soon come back—I don't think," and he laughed again as he put the boat upon a course which showed me that he was a seaman. His friend meanwhile ate biscuit as though we had a ton of it. And I could but sit there helpless, a horrid nausea coming upon me and yet an incredulity which was almost merciful.

"Where is Mr. Barnes?" I asked them, despite their threats. Manvilla jerked his thumb down to the sea and snorted like an animal.

"Your friend met with an accident. It was not our fault. We have done what we could. Be careful that you do not follow him."

"Good heavens!" I cried, "you have murhim, then?"

Manvilla frowned and looked at me with eyes full of evil.

"When we come to the shore," he said, "you shall pay me for those words. Meanwhile you shall row the boat when the wind goes down. That is good for the health, señor. I do not like to see young men idle."

They laughed together at this, as though it was the best of jokes. As for me, what with the thought of my poor friend, done to death foully I did not doubt, the company of these vile assassins and our dreadful situation, I cared neither for them nor their threats. An impulse seized me to throw myself upon them there and then, and, acting in a fit of uncontrollable anger, I leaped at Manvilla and seized him by the throat. And that was a mad thing to do, for there were two of them, as wiry as leopards and as cruel as beasts. They had me on the floor, with a knife at my windpipe before I could have counted ten. And yet they did not kill me.

"Over with him," says the one I did not know. Manvilla would not agree to it.

"No, no," says he. "The gentleman understands the art of rowing, and we do not. Leave this to me, Rolleda. I know what I am doing."

And then to me he said:

"Where is your knife, young man? Give it me or I will kill you."

I pointed to it in my belt, and he snatched it away and tossed it to his friend. Then he released me without another word, and sat in the stern sheets again. I was bruised by the fall, and my left hand cut by the knife, but what I felt most was the humiliation of it. To be at the beck and call of such as these! And my friend dead, and they had murdered him. None but the man who has had a true messmate on a ship will understand that feeling rightly. Had there been a pistol in my hand, I would have shot them both where they sat.

Well, I had not, and I could but bide my time. The wind fell away as the morning went on, and they made me row, as Manvilla had promised. I did so for my own sake, not for theirs, for I knew they would make an attempt on my life sooner or later. When that moment should come, I determined that I would put up the best fight I could for it, and if ever I did get ashore, I swore that they should hang for the murder of as true a seaman as ever set foot on a ship.

It is heavy work rowing a great lifeboat with a couple of sweeps in the Atlantic, and presently I fell tired of it and asked them for water. Now they showed their hands plainly enough by refusing it to me.

"The water is all drunk, young man," Manvilla said. "Get on with your rowing, and then we shall find a ship. I promise you there shall be neither food nor drink until you do so. Row, my boy, and you shall have your reward."

He leered and looked at his companion, saying as plainly as though his lips had uttered the words: "We know what kind of a reward it will be." I made no remark on that myself, but I refused to row any farther, and pulling the sweeps into the boat, I went forward and told them they might do their rowing themselves.

"And if either of you lays a hand on me," said I, "the whole lot of us go into the sea, so help me God."

They saw that I meant it, and it cowed them a bit. There was at that time just a puff of wind from the north-west, enough to fill the sails, and a strong current appeared to be carrying us to the south-east—a current of whose existence every seaman knows, but of which I was in ignorance—so between the two the boat made good headway. It was a treat to lie in the warming sunshine, and under other circumstances I would have said we were fortunate. But the thought of my poor messmate filled my head, and I knew that the cowardly pair who had done for him would do for me also if they had the chance.

This thought was never absent from me. It became an obsession when night fell and the darkness closed about us. I was half dead for want of sleep, my lips parched, my tongue burning, and yet there must I sit, knowing that if I closed my eyes the pair of them would be on top of me. Never, I believe, did a boy suffer more doubt and uncertainty in an open boat. The thing got on my nerves at last, and I started at every shadow. Once I struck out into space, and expected to hear the Mexicans laugh. When no sound came from them I knew that they were asleep, and saying that the end would be the same, whatever it was, I closed my eyes at last and cared not a scudo for the consequences.

Well, I might have known what they would have been.

When I awoke from that heavy sleep it was neither the moonlight nor the sunshine which awakened me.

It was the clear, cold water of the Atlantic.

How it roared in my ears. Everybody has been under water some time or other, feeling that the lungs would burst if he could not get to the top again.

That was just what I felt that night.

I was not in darkness, for the moon shone full on the still sea. Yet the passing from sleep to waking had a terror I shall never forget as long as I live.

Where was I? And was it life or death?

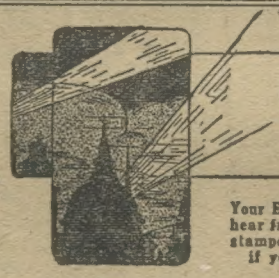
At first I thought this was a nightmare of my sleep, and fought fiercely to arouse myself and come to my senses. Gradually the truth was forced upon me. The murderers had flung me out of the boat and left me to fight for my life in the great waste of the Atlantic.

I rose to the surface at last, but could see nothing of the boat. The swell caught me and lifted me high upon its crest, or flung me like a log to the hollows. My clothes were heavy as lead about me, and I had not skill enough as a swimmer to get rid of my coat. All my effort for the moment was to keep myself out of the dreadful depths, where the water choked my lungs and horrible noises rang in my ears. A mad rage against the Mexicans possessed me, and even in the sea I longed to be at them again, even though my own life were the price.

Of course, I thought I was done for.

What chance of life could a man have in that wild of the ocean—a man pitted against Fate inexorable. Let it be five minutes or fifty, and the end must be the same. Cold and fatigue and death. The discovery of the master key, the beginning of the greatest of all adventures—death. I think I would have laughed at anybody who told me that there was one chance in a thousand of my salvation. Minute by minute weakness grew upon me. I looked up at the stars and they became blurred to my vision. The moonlight seemed to be fading. When the dull outline of a ship loomed suddenly as it were in the shadows, I believed it to be another hallucination. The lifebelt that splashed suddenly in the water before me should have been thrown by ghostly hands. I caught it with a despairing hand, and all the love of my life returning to me as upon a freshet, I held it tenaciously. Then some unseen power drew me quickly through the rushing water, a strong hand caught me by the neck, and, reaction coming, I went off into a dead faint and remembered nothing more.

(*Don't miss next week's gripping instalment.*)



# The Editor Chats

**Your Editor is always glad to hear from his Chums. Send a stamped, addressed envelope if you want an answer.**

WELL, Chums, here you are! You'll all agree that this number of the Old Paper is about the best yet, eh? That serial of Mr. Pemberton's promises to be *great!* I'm not going to tell you a word about what's coming on in it later; I'd not like to spoil your pleasure of doing so.

I think you'll like the "Lost Will" also; Jimmy is in high fettle, isn't he?

Will you do your very best, all of you, to get new readers for the Old Paper? Now is the time, when the serials are all beginning. Do this for me, won't you, like good fellows?

## An Apology

I'm sorry to have had to disappoint you, but Captain Shaw's story has had to be left out this week. I promised it, I know, but the gallant Captain is on duty in some place the name of which I mustn't tell you, and the yarn hasn't arrived at the time of writing! But it's coming, and you'll get it, never fear!

## About Some Books

You chaps want to know about the latest and best books? Well, I'll tell you of a few. One is "All About Engines," by C. H. Cressy, and tells you all you want to know about the power that makes things move. It's crammed full of pictures—no fewer than 182 of them! Every kind of engine you've heard about, I think, is dealt with, and you'll learn from it what really happens inside an engine. The price is 6s. net. Ask your bookseller to get it for you, or write to Messrs. Cassell for it, enclosing 6s. 4d.

A big budget of stories and articles awaits you all in a book I've prepared, "The British Boy's Annual." It contains yarns by all your favourite authors, and is chock-full of interesting things. Get that too! It is 5s. net, or 5s. 4d. post free.

I will tell you some more about books later on—good books for all of you. Any time you fellows want to know the best books to read, just drop me a line. I'll tell you.

## A Soap Rack

It isn't often I try my hand at this sort of thing, but I *did* make this, and I thought you'd like to know!

A soap rack for the scullery is another useful article which can be cut and pieced together by the average boy in a very little time.

From a cigar box, or similar article, cut to the required measurements, and fix together with small brads, using a piece of perforated zinc for the bottom to allow the water to drain away.

P.S.—A note just received from Captain Shaw says: "The yarn's in the post"; so it would seem we'll have it next week! That's good news.

A Schoolboy's Part in the Great War

# KEPT BACK

*The Frustrating of Certain Rascals*

## By T. C. BRIDGES

### CHAPTER 1

**Donald Selwyn grows Suspicious**

"IT'S blowing a bit, Don," said Lieutenant Archibald Selwyn, as he rose from his chair by the wardroom stove. "Don't you think you'd better doss here to-night, and go ashore in the morning?"

Donald Selwyn, a tall, fair-haired youngster of about fifteen, looked up at his elder brother. "Don't I jolly well wish I could, Archie?" he said longingly. "But it's not to be done. Old Rabbits would be in a frightful wax. I gave him my word I'd be back by eleven. Unless, of course, you say you can't send a boat ashore?" he added hopefully.

"Oh, it's not so bad as that," replied the other with a smile. "And I say"—glancing at his wrist watch—"are you aware it's past ten? It'll take you all your time to reach the school by eleven. And there'll be a bit of a bobble off the Point, too. The wind's over the tide."

"Oh, that's all right," said Donald readily. "We needn't go round the Point at all. Your chaps can shove me ashore in Longstone Cove. There's an easy way up the cliff, and from there it's not much more than a mile to Wimshurst."

"Cross country, you mean?"

"Yes, but I know every bit of it, and it isn't dark. There's a good moon behind the clouds."

"All right, then," responded his brother. "I'll tell Warman to drop you in the Cove. Sentry!"

The sentry entered and Selwyn told him to pass the word for Warman. The latter, who was Selwyn's marine servant, appeared almost at once, and the Lieutenant ordered him to get the dinghy over, and for him and Bellstaff to pull Mr. Selwyn junior to the shore.

"Wish you could have stayed," he said to his brother, as he accompanied him on deck. "It's a poor game for you having to spend your holiday at school."

"Oh, it isn't so bad," Donald replied pluckily. "Rabbits is really very decent, and I get lots of grub. Suppose I shan't see you again?" he added rather sadly.

"You will, if I'm here, old son. But, of course, we may be shifted any minute. You never can tell in war time. Anyhow, I'll let you know. I'll be sending Warman ashore to-morrow and he'll bring you word from me. So long."

Donald dropped lightly from the deck of the destroyer into the dinghy which bobbed alongside, and took the tiller. His brother was right. There was quite a breeze and the spray splashed over the small craft as she drove shorewards. But under the strong and skilful arms of Warman and Bellstaff she reached the beach in safety.

Donald scrambled into the bows and watching his chance took a flying leap ashore. He shouted good night to the men, then turned and made straight for the cliff.

This was really only a steep, sandy bluff and he was soon on top. He found himself on a stretch of rough turf full of rabbit holes, and backed by a plantation of wind-bent firs. Clouds were flying across the moon, making sharp changes between light and darkness, changes which might have puzzled anyone not familiar with the lie of the land.

But Don knew every yard of the rough ground and tramped away across it, whistling cheerily as he went.

A tall figure stepped out from behind a gorse bush and barred his way. A big, rough-looking man in a cap, carrying a heavy cudgel.

"'Oo are you?" he demanded gruffly. "What are you doing 'ere?"

"Me!" retorted Don. "What do you mean? This is common land. I've got as much right here as you."

"Not much you ain't," replied the other in a threatening tone. "This here is Mr. Warner's land and you're trespassing. 'Ow do I know you ain't poaching?"

"Warner! Do you mean that fellow who used to be called Wagner?"

"I dunno what 'is name used to be. Anyways, it's Warner now, and this is 'is land and no one ain't allowed on it no more."

"I don't believe it for a minute," returned Don curtly. "Anyhow, I'm not doing any harm, and as for poaching, do you think I should be fool enough to be whistling if I was looking for rabbits?"

"Wot brings you here then at this time o' night?" demanded the big fellow suspiciously.

"I'm walking home to Wimshurst, if you want to know. And if you want any further information about me you'd better apply to Mr. Roberts."

Don's boldness seemed to impress the fellow.

"Orl right, then," he growled. "You go straight 'ome, and don't let me catch you 'ere again or there'll be trouble. I'm Mr. Warner's keeper, and I'm paid to keep trespassers off of this warren, so you mind."

"Very good," replied Don, and continued on his way briskly.

He did not look back, yet was conscious that the fellow followed him for some little distance. The whole business puzzled him, and being a sharp lad for his years it also aroused his suspicions. The land was common, he was sure of that. And as for Warner, who was lord of the manor, he was a naturalised German. There was something fishy about it all and Don suddenly made up his mind to investigate.

Reaching the belt of firs, he slipped in among the thickest of them and hid. A few moments later the keeper passed at a little distance and vanished. Don chuckled softly and crept back on his tracks, then turned to the right and went along through the trees in an easterly direction.

In about five minutes he reached the end of the fir plantation and looked out on a stretch of wind-swept downs. Just then the clouds rolled away and brilliant moonlight flooded the scene, revealing to Don's astonished eyes a large motor-car standing a couple of hundred yards away.

The car was in a slight hollow with a rise of ground hiding it from the sea, and thick gorse protecting it from view on the landward side. There were two men in it, or rather one was in and the other standing by the tonneau, apparently packing something away inside the car. They were too far off and the light was too bad to identify them.

Don watched breathlessly. The man finished his packing and got in again. Then the car, which was evidently provided with a self-starter, was backed a little, turned, and went jolting slowly off across the rough ground in the direction which Don knew was that of Lonestone Manor House.

"Rum! Very rum!" muttered Don. "Now, I'd like to know what the mischief those beauties were playing at. They couldn't be signalling, for I saw no lights. Besides, if they had, Archie would have spotted 'em double quick. But I'll vow they were up to no good, and I'll jolly well get word to Archie to-morrow."

Suddenly it occurred to him that he had wasted an awful lot of time, and that he would probably be late back. He looked at his watch. It was ten minutes to eleven.

"My hat, but there'll be trouble!" he said ruefully, and started off at a brisk run for Wimshurst.

He was quite right. There was trouble. And the worst of it was that Mr. Roberts who, even in holiday time, could not quite forget

The man's face was convulsed with rage. He swung up the knotted stick

that he was a schoolmaster, ordered him as a punishment to stay in the next morning and work at his holiday task.

Don was frantic. He was crazy to send a wire or some sort of message to his brother. He might, of course, have told his housemaster, but the latter was not a very sympathetic person, and Don was secretly afraid of being jeered at. So he resolved to wait until the afternoon, then go down to the village and send a boat off.

The moment lunch was over he was away. But luck was against him. The sea was still rough, and he could not find anyone who would undertake the long row round the Point to where the *Whimbrel* still lay. Don was getting desperate enough to go to the local police when, to his great delight, he saw Warman, smart in his dark blue marine uniform, marching up the street.

He gave him a shout, and Warman turned.

"I was just going up to the school to leave a note for you from the Commander, sir."

He handed it over, and Donald ripped it open.

"My dear Don,—Orders are we sail to-morrow morning. Don't know where and mustn't tell you if I did. Poor luck, but I'll write first chance and tell you if we're coming down this way again. Be good.

"Yours ever, Archie."

"Ou to-morrow, he says, Warman. I'm awfully sorry. But, see here, Warman, I've got a message I want to send to my brother. When are you going back?"

"Not yet, sir. I've got a list o' commissions nigh a yard long."

"How long will they take?"

"An hour, I dessay, sir."

"Well, I'll write a note, and if I don't see you I'll leave it at Parton's, the pastrycook's. You'll be sure to take it, won't you? It's jolly important."

"Right you are, sir. I won't forget it."

Parton was an ally of Don, and while Don indulged in a small pastry and a cream bun, he got him pen and paper, and Don wrote a full description of his adventure of the previous night. He had only just finished it when Warman came in.

"Got through quicker'n I thought, sir. Is this the letter?"

"Yes, and you be careful of it, Warman," whispered Don. "Between you and me, I ran into some hanky-panky business up on the cliffs last night—two chaps with a motor-car up on the common—and I've a strong notion they're spies. I want the Commander to send a boat ashore to-night and investigate. See?"

Warman's eyes brightened.

"I hope he sends me, sir," he said eagerly.

"I hope he does. Tell him I'm going to slip out and have a squint round. It's not far from where you landed me last night."

"All right, sir," said Warman; "but you keep your eyes open, Mr. Donald. Them there spies don't stick at much if they think there's anyone on to their dirty tricks."

Warman's warning came back to Donald a few minutes later when he noticed a heavy-shouldered man looking into a shop window on the other side of the street, and spotted him for the keeper who had tackled him on the previous evening. He watched the fellow a moment or two, but the man did not seem to see him, so Donald continued on his way back to the school.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Last Gasp

Donald knew well enough that there was not the smallest chance of Mr. Roberts giving him leave to go out after dark. But there was no hurry. He went off to bed at nine, turned in and deliberately waited for an hour, when he heard the master go up to his own rooms. Then he himself got out, dressed, and, carrying his boots, went softly down to the library. This had french windows opening on the lawn, and as Donald had already taken the precaution of greasing the hinges and bolts, he was able to slip out without making a particle of noise.

The wind had fallen, the moon was only two days from full, and though there were a few clouds about, it was nearly as light as day. Donald slipped through the shrubbery, climbed a fence and made off briskly across country.

Nearing the common he checked a bit. It was so much lighter than the previous night that it was quite necessary to go quietly. If there were spies about he had no idea of letting them spot him first.

So he did a regular Red Indian stalk across the open ground, dodging from one gorse bush to another in the most approved style, and flattened himself when he reached the trees, that no one could possibly have seen him.

He gained the end of the wood and looked out. Not a sign of any living being, and no sound but the plash of the waves on the beach below the bluff.

Don was conscious of a pang of real disappointment. He had positively counted on the car being about again. Had he warned his brother and brought him ashore on a wild goose chase? Archie would not be pleased if this was the case.

He turned and went westwards again, keeping well under the trees, and flitting from one trunk to another like a shadow.

Still nothing. Don was awfully sick. He came to a place where there was only a strip of rough ground about three hundred yards wide between the coppice and the cliff, and decided to cross to the cliff edge and see if the boat was coming in.

He was quite near the cliff when a sound made him drop. It was the unmistakable hum of a motor-car engine. He crouched in some tall grass, listening hard.

The sound came nearer, and peering out of his refuge he saw the car with the two men in it, creeping along very slowly under the edge of the coppice.

It stopped at last—stopped no more than a couple of hundred yards from where he stood—and the men got out. They unpacked something and began jointing lengths of piping together, like men putting up a fishing rod. Then they raised the poles, which were about ten feet high, and Don's heart beat furiously as it dawned upon him that these were for wireless work. He could actually see the wire that was stretched between them. It glistened in the moonlight.

They went on working briskly. Don got frightfully excited. They were getting and probably sending messages. He glanced at his watch. It was nearly eleven. What on earth had become of Archie and his men? They ought to have been ashore long ago.

Minutes went by, and still the spies were busy. Don grew almost desperate. He knew that he could do nothing by himself, and yet the temptation to try was very strong. At last he left his refuge and began creeping nearer to the car.

He was so keen on the two men that he had no eyes for anything else, and he got the shock of his life when a shadow fell across him and a deep, hoarse voice gave a startled cry.

"The brat! It's the same one again! By the living Jingo! I'll give you something to remember me by this time!"

A huge paw shot out, and catching Don by the collar swung him off his feet.

"Now, what ye got to say for yourself?" snarled the so-called keeper in a fierce whisper.

The man's eyes glared down on him, the big, ugly face was working with fury, and Don saw that his captor grasped in his right hand an enormous cudgel.

Don was scared. What youngster in his place would not have been? But he kept his head.

"I should think I ought to ask you that," he retorted. "A fine lot of good you're doing, looking after rabbits, when there are German spies actually running wireless right under your nose!"

For an instant the fellow seemed staggered. It was clear that he had not thought Don knew so much. But he recovered himself in a moment.

"That's done you in, my lad," he said in a grating voice. "You knows too much, you do!" To Don's horror he raised his great club.

"So you mean to murder me?" cried Don. "But it won't do you any good, you beastly spy. There'll be a boat in from my brother's ship in about two two's."

The fellow laughed jeeringly.

"Ho, will there? You take me for as big a fool as yourself. Suppose you think I didn't see you down in the village to-day, a-giving of that letter to that marine chap? But I did, and your letter's in my pocket this minute."

Don's blood ran cold, but he managed to keep a stiff lip.

"I don't believe it," he retorted. "Warman wouldn't give it up to a chap like you, I know."

"Give it up!" jeered the other. The brute seemed to take the same joy in torturing his victim as a cat does in playing with a mouse. "He didn't. I took it from him."

"You're a liar!" replied Don flatly.

The man's face was convulsed with rage. He swung up his cudgel over his head.

"That's your last word, my lad," he exclaimed.

If Don had jerked back, trying to break loose from his captor's grip, next moment his skull would have been cracked. Instead he plunged forward, and flung both arms round the big brute's body.

With a yell of fury the fellow brought the club down, but he was too late. The only result was that he nearly dislocated his wrist, and the great knotted stick flew out of his hand.

Don's head was saved, but that was all. It was only a moment's respite, for if one thing was surer than another it was that the big brute could kill the boy with his hands almost as easily as with his club.

Don heard a savage oath and felt a great fist almost as hard and heavy as the club strike him a crushing blow on the left shoulder. It shook him so that his head swayed, but still he would not give up. Wrapping his left leg round the other's right, he flung his weight forward.

The man staggered, and for an instant Don thought he had him down. He would have, but for the unlucky fact that his opponent was standing on higher ground than he.

The only result was a volley of foul abuse, and another blow which caught Don in the middle of the back and shook all the wind and almost all the life out of him. He still clung on, but he felt his grip weakening. He was sick and giddy and gave himself up for lost. Down came the great fist once more and Don let go. He heard a yell of triumph, then this was cut short by a stunning crash.

A blinding flash leaped before his eyes and a blast of air struck him and flung him and his adversary both down upon the rough grass.

As he lay there gasping, unable to move, hardly able to breathe, there was a second terrific explosion, and in its vivid glare some huge dark object like a monstrous bird rushed roaring overhead with incredible speed.

He was too dazed to understand in the least what had happened or what was happening. All he did make out was that the big man was moving. He seemed to be trying to regain his feet.

Don made a frantic effort and rolled away back into a little hollow under a rock. He saw the other on his knees struggling up and glaring round like a wounded wild beast.

"Ah!" he growled deep in his throat, and before Don's horrified eyes he drew a long-bladed knife from a sheath at his belt. The blade glittered in the moonlight and the man's face was like a fiend's in the pale gleam.

Now Don finally gave up all hope. The other gained his feet, and though he reeled like a drunken man, he came forward.

Suddenly from over the edge of the cliff a figure came flying.

"Ah, would ye?" he shouted, and taking a great jump, landed full on the back of the big brute.

The keeper pitched forward and his head struck the rock just above Don with a sound like a butcher's pole-axe meeting a bullock's skull.

"Reckon I warn't too soon," panted the newcomer, as he picked himself up. He stooped down and lifted Don.

"He ain't hurt you, sir, has he?" he asked anxiously.

"N—no, Bellstaff. I'm all right," Don answered feebly.

Then the burly figure of the bluejacket swam before his eyes, he dropped back and lay very quiet and completely insensible.

When he came to someone was dabbing cold sea-water in his face with a rolled-up handkerchief.

"Steady on," he said weakly. "It's all going in my eyes."

"That's all right, Warman," he heard Bellstaff say in a tone of great relief. "He's a-coming round. Give him a drop out o' that there flask."

The strong spirit stung Don's throat, but it sent the blood rushing through his veins again. He opened his eyes.

"Did you get them?" he asked eagerly.

"The chap as was trying to do you in, sir?" replied Bellstaff. "Why, I don't reckon he'll give any more trouble, unless it is to a coroner's jury. His skull's busted like a egg."

"Not him," replied Don hastily. "The wireless chaps, I mean."

"Them with the car? Oh, the airyplane got them all right. One's gone in and t'other's got his leg broke."

"Hurray!" Don exclaimed feebly. "That's great! But I say, how did the 'plane get here? I don't understand a bit. And how did you fellows come? That beggar who tackled me vowed he had my note to my brother in his pocket. What's it all mean, Warman?"

Warman hesitated a moment.

"So he has, sir, for all I knows," he answered uncomfortably. "Fact is, sir, he doped me. Offered me a drink and I were fool enough to take it. About two minutes after I heeled over and went to sleep, and I reckon he robbed me."

"Then how on earth did you get here in time?"

"Well, you see, sir, Bellstaff here he were ashore too, and he found me and give me cold pig till I woke up. That were about eight o'clock. Then 'e pulled me out to the ship and by that time I were just getting my thinking box working again.

"So I told the commander what you'd said to me, and, knowing as it were getting mighty late, he wirelessed over to Tarnport, asking 'em to send a 'plane along in a 'urry. Then him and me and Bellstaff we came along in the dinghy."

"And got here just in time," said Don with a faint grin. "And where's my brother now?"

"Here," came a voice, and Lieutenant Selwyn's tall figure came striding across. "How are you, old son?"

"Tophole," declared Don, sitting up. "So you got those Boche rotters, Archie?"

"The 'plane did. Dropped a bomb each side, and scared them so that they drove off full speed, fell in a hole, and busted themselves pretty badly.

"Well, Don," he added, "thanks to you, this has been a jolly good night's work. We've wiped up the worst gang of spies on the coast, and if you don't get something out of it you ought to. Now, I'm going to take you out to the ship and send Bellstaff over to explain your absence to Roberts."

"He'll be in an awful wax," said Don apprehensively.

"Oh no, he won't," replied Archie with a laugh. "Or if he is you won't hear anything about it."

In this Lieutenant Archibald Selwyn proved a true prophet, for after the first shock Mr. Roberts, so far from punishing Don, actually congratulated him.

And when, a few days later, an official-looking envelope arrived from the Admiralty addressed to Donald Selwyn, Esq., Don himself was not more delighted than the housemaster at finding that it contained an autograph letter of congratulation from a very high personage indeed, accompanied by a cheque for £100.

NOTICE

*Our readers are informed that all the characters in each of the stories in this magazine are purely imaginary, and if the name of any living person happens to be mentioned, no personal reflection is intended.*

## A Humorous "Office Boy" Story

"There's the scoundrel!" cried the newcomer. "I spotted him through a pair of field-glasses"

# THE JOKER

*How a Little Fun Helped in a Great Crisis* :: ::

## By RADCLIFFE MARTIN

LIFE was dull for Allan Finlay in the solicitor's office of old Mr. Mackie. Only six weeks since Allan had been the liveliest member of the rowdiest form in Shalford School. Now he led a life of exceeding dreariness. The work he had to do was little more than that of an office boy, and there was not enough of it to fill up his time.

He did what he could to enliven matters, but the placing of an ounce or so of magnesia in the lady typist's teapot scarcely made that damsel scream when her innocent tea foamed up in her face. Noting also that Mr. Roddy, the junior clerk, took an abnormal interest in horse-racing, the youth contrived a little jest. He would lean out of his window and raise a hoarse shout: "Speshul winner of the big race." The next moment Mr. Roddy would look in at his room and call: "Tell the boss I've gone across to the County Court Registrar's office if he asks for me," and then vanish in search of the non-existent newsboy. Unfortunately Mr. Roddy detected Allan at this prank one day.

"I'll knock your head off, you young pup," cried Mr. Roddy.

"All right. Do it," said Allan, waiting steadily.

"Just you do it once more and I'll knock your head off," continued Mr. Roddy, whose longing for battle ceased when he saw the junior was ready for him.

Allan even got wrong with the boss, for one morning when he was passing the time by doing a little exercise—merely bending backwards and trying to lift a chair with his teeth—he was startled by the advent of old Mr. Mackie.

"If you desire to become a circus clown, sir," said the old gentleman, "you have come to the wrong place for training. If, on the other hand, you ever wish to be articled to me I must see a very considerable change in you, sir." Mr. Roddy was lurking outside grinning and Allan guessed that he had put the boss on his track.

For a week Allan was perfectly well-behaved, and then one morning, just after he had arrived at the office, he was struck by the extraordinary behaviour of an old gentleman in the house opposite. Looking from the second-storey window he could distinctly see that the old gentleman, stripped to the waist, was going round the room on his hands and knees. Then the old gentleman rose and standing beneath the open window raised his legs in the air alternately, at the same time taking deep breaths. Allan felt that there was an opportunity here. The next morning he got a pea-shooter and ascending to an office on the floor above, where old books and letters were kept, stationed himself at the window. The old gentleman was punctual at his exercise. When a pea hit him in the midst of his plump back his surprised look as he turned round to see who had assaulted him made Allan nearly die with laughter.

Two or three more excellent shots made the old gentleman rush to the window and stare up and down the street for his tormentor. Allan discreetly retired. The next day, to the youth's intense disgust, the old gentleman performed with closed windows. Allan had to wait his chance.

Two or three days later, on his arrival at the office he noticed that the bedroom window was wide open at the top again. Allan slid quietly away to the top office and after waiting ten minutes saw the old gentleman begin his athletic performances. His first pea hit the old gentleman fairly on the nose just as he was in the midst of deep breathing and leg-raising. His victim promptly vanished. Allan waited and watched, but the old gentleman had evidently had enough. He thought that sport was over for the day and went downstairs to his office again.

At half-past ten Mr. Roddy looked in and said, "Finlay, Mr. Mackie wants to see you at once in his office." There was a malicious smile on the clerk's face.

Allan hurried downstairs to see the boss. Old Mr. Mackie seemed disturbed and troubled.

"Finlay," he said, "what were you doing here in my office at half-past nine?"

"I wasn't here, sir."

"Where were you?"

"Upstairs, sir."

You were not in your own room for Miss Belsham looked in to ask you why you had omitted to post some letters. Mr. Roddy said that he saw you coming out of my office at half-past nine. What were you doing here?"

"I wasn't here, sir. I never have been in here except when you have sent for me."

"Then where were you?"

"I was in the office on the top floor where the old books are kept, sir."

"What were you doing there?"

Allan coloured but did not reply. He could not explain that he had gone there to tickle up a portly old gentleman with a pea-shooter.

"Answer my question, sir."

"Oh, just potting about, sir."

"You had no business there? No one had sent you for anything?"

"No, sir."

"I must caution you to be very careful, Finlay. Last night I inadvertently left my pocket-book containing ten one-pound notes on my desk. I find this morning that the notes have gone. Mr. Manvers, my managing clerk, who is absolutely trustworthy, unlocked the office, and is confident the pocket-book was on the desk. When I came in the book was on the floor, but the notes were gone. Now, you come of a decent family. I respect your father. If you will admit that you have done wrong and return the notes I will overlook the matter, though you cannot continue here."

"I never came near the office, sir! I never touched the notes!"

"Mr. Roddy saw you. Miss Belsham missed you from your room. Your explanation that you were upstairs is no explanation, for you had no business there. I give you two minutes. Unless you confess I'll hand you over to the police."

Allan stood as if paralysed. He heard the clock ticking out the seconds and yet he could think of nothing to say.

"One minute," said Mr. Mackie.

There was a stir behind him. He turned round to see a stout old gentleman in a dressing-gown actually coming through the window.

"There is the scoundrel!" cried the newcomer. "I did not think he could be connected with your firm, Mackie, till I saw him in your office talking to you. He is the scoundrel. I watched him myself. I hid in my room behind a curtain and spotted him through a pair of field-glasses."

"Another witness!" said Mr. Mackie. "In half a minute, unless you confess, I shall ring for the police and give you in charge."

"You won't, Mackie," said the quaint intruder. "I shall give him in charge. I am the injured party. I shall charge him with malicious assault. I have been assaulted before. This morning I resolved to keep a good look out. Directly the first pea hit me I hid behind a curtain with a pair of field-glasses. There was no one in this office but a young man with reddish hair. On the second floor there was a lady typist. Her window was shut, so I do not suspect her. On the top floor I noticed a window open and at it the face of this abominable scoundrel. He had a pea-shooter in his hand. I will swear to him anywhere."

"What time was this?" interrupted Mr. Mackie suddenly.

"Time—I am sure to the exact minute of the assault, and I defy him to prove an alibi. Directly the pea struck me I glanced at the clock so that I could give precise evidence at the police-court. I shall charge him with abominable assault at 9.30 precisely."

"I am awfully sorry, sir," said Allan. "I admit I was upstairs then and I did fire peas at you."

Mr. Mackie rang his bell and Mr. Roddy answered it.

"Get a policeman at once, Mr. Roddy," said Mr. Mackie,

"Yes, sir. One was passing, so I took the liberty of asking him to stop in case you needed him."

"That was thoughtful of you, Mr. Roddy; bring him in."

Mr. Roddy eagerly ushered the policeman into the room.

"You saw young Finlay come into this room at 9.30, Mr. Roddy?" said Mr. Mackie.

"Yes, sir, I'll swear to it."

"You never came in this room youself, of course?"

"No, sir, not till you rang for me this morning."

"Venables," said Mr. Mackie, "do you recognise the person you saw through your field-glasses in this room at 9.30 this morning?"

"It's this red-haired young man, of course," replied the old gentleman, "but this other is the scoundrel."

"Mr. Roddy," said Mr. Mackie sternly, "at the time you swear Finlay was in my room he was on the top floor playing practical jokes on my respected client, Mr. Venables, and you were in my room. That was at 9.30, was it not, Venables?"

"Yes, the young scamp is the culprit. Let him lie as he will I'll swear he was in the top storey assaulting me at half-past nine."

Roddy gave a gasp. His face was as white as chalk now.

"Oh, Mr. Mackie, don't give me in charge. I'd lost a lot of money and I had to pay ten pounds this week. I meant to have put it back directly I had a bit of luck."

"That's enough, Roddy. I might have overlooked it, but you had a policeman ready for this innocent youngster. I can't forgive your conduct towards him. I give him in charge, constable. In your presence he has admitted his theft."

Roddy was being removed from the office when Mr. Venables said: "Stop, officer, I have another charge to make."

"No, Venables," said Mr. Mackie. "This youngster has had enough this morning. He will apologise humbly to you and promise never to play another practical joke again."

"I'm awfully sorry, sir," said Allan. I hope you'll forgive me. May I thank you for being the means of saving me from prison and disgrace?"

"Prison would be the best place for you, sir," said the old gentleman, "if your idea of business is pea-shooting at respectable citizens. I'm not sure a month or so would not do you good. Still, on the whole, I am glad that I saw you in the office talking with my old friend, Mackie, and came across in a hurry to expose you. But the next time, you young rascal, the next time a pea hits me you will suffer the sternest rigours of the law."

Allan Finlay is a highly respectable articled clerk now. He never plays practical jokes. The one thorn in his flesh is that an eccentric old client called Venables will call at the office and before the office boys make loud inquiries: "Done much pea-shooting lately, Finlay?"

# WHAT BOYS HAVE INVENTED

*A Chance for Every Chum*

**By J. M. OUSELEY**

THE enthusiasm which you boys have shown in these inventions and business articles has far exceeded the anticipations of both the editor and myself, although we had pictured receiving from you bagfuls of letters.

## How "Chums" Helps You

During the past few weeks many capital propositions and ideas for inventions and improvements have reached my hands, and some of them have been so good as to compel me to suggest provisionally protecting them, which for six months is almost as good as patenting an idea. This helps a boy to show it round to people with money, if he hasn't any himself, and it also enables him to get an engineer to fashion a model or a finished article, so that it can be seen whether the invention is marketable and really serviceable.

You would be absolutely surprised if I were to tell you—as I intend to at some time—how varied are the inventions which have come to me. From little things that make housework easier to tremendous things designed to snaffle U-boats and destroy aircraft. And some of them are brilliant. I should not be surprised if the Inventions Board find that the genius that CHUMS has discovered in its readers will be helpful.

## Exploiting Youth's Ideas

I have said before in this column that invention springs either from natural inspiration or by accident. Nature is very funny in that respect. Very few old men have invented anything at all. Her favourite field for the exploitation of new ideas is the youthful brain.

It would hardly be believed that many great inventions now in use are the outcome of the genius of boys, and this is one reason why your editor and I want to foster your love for inventing things. I want to help you in the name of the paper.

Some of you fellows may have seen the great iron bridge at Sunderland. Well, that was designed and built by one John Ericsson, then a young man, but he was an inventor at twelve. Think of it! He was still in his teens when he helped to scheme out two or three of the great Swedish canals, and six hundred men looked to him for direction. More wonderful still, at the tender age of eleven he invented a new form of sawmill. Later in life, it was Ericsson who gave to the world a wonderful hot-air engine for ships.

## Made £28,000 at Nineteen

Another boy-inventor was Charles F. Brush. You electric chaps, you recognise that name, don't you? Well, at the age of fourteen he invented a new electric motor, which was followed by many another electric idea with which his name rings.

You know all about Edison and what he did when he wasn't yet fourteen!

Cast-iron cement was another boy's invention, but his name has been unfortunately lost. I suppose like some of you boys who go in for inventing things and don't know what to do with them, this poor little beggar probably told a third-party of his discovery and so forfeited his right to recognition.

The pianoforte—which some boys like and some boys don't—owes its present shape and build to a boy named Erard, whose name is a household word throughout the world. He was christened Sebastian, and he was but sixteen when he thought out his piano scheme, and before he was nineteen he had made £28,000!

## No "Cold Water" on Ideas

There are many other instances to prove that Nature selects youth as her medium for presenting the world with ideas for inventions. There is a process known as "throwing cold water" on a lad's efforts, but here we spray your letters with warm praise if the work deserves it.

I had intended to tell you about some of the really promising things I have seen from my fellow-chums, but as I have come to the end of my space I must reserve this information for a future article. I can see a busy time in front of me with these business and invention articles—and your letters. That's what I want.

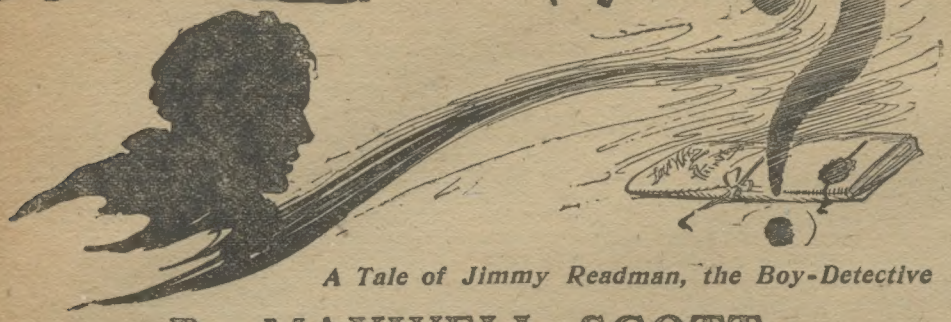
So, whatever idea you have, send it along. Do not be diffident about it; it is the fellow who has ideas and who is not afraid to moot them who will make good in life.

J.B.—You will have received by now the papers provisionally protecting the "guard"; and my letter will explain everything.

L. M.—I'm sorry, but that "boom" idea wants working out a little; I will let you have a note about it after my engineer friend has gone carefully into it.

Our Second Fine New Serial!

# The Lost Will



*A Tale of Jimmy Readman, the Boy-Detective*

## By MAXWELL SCOTT

### CHAPTER 1

#### A Cry for Help

NO wonder Wiggins was puzzled. You would be puzzled yourself if you were walking along a deserted country road about ten o'clock at night and you suddenly perceived a lighted window on the far side of a field in which you knew there wasn't a house, or a hut, or a barn, or a building of any kind!

Wiggins, it must be explained, was a young police constable who was stationed at the village of Barnby, on the north-east coast. The road referred to was the turnpike which connected Barnby with the neighbouring town of Highfield. The field was a ten-acre pasture, which adjoined the road and which formed part of the holding of a Barnby farmer of the name of Jackson.

Wiggins had been to Highfield and was walking back to Barnby. As he was about to pass the gate of this field he suddenly pulled up with a gasp of bewilderment. He knew the field as well as he knew his own garden; and he knew for a positive fact that it did not contain a building of any sort, kind or description. And yet, staring him in the face, on the far side of the field, was a patch of light which was unmistakably the light of a lamp shining through a small white-curtained window!

"Well, this beats all!" he growled, peering over the top of the gate and scratching his head. "If that isn't a window, I'll eat my hat! Yet how can it be a window, when there isn't even a cart-shed in the field? I must investigate this."

He opened the gate and strode across the field, but it was not until he had nearly reached the lighted window that the mystery was solved.

"Why, it's a caravan!" he exclaimed.

He was right. A neat-looking caravan was drawn up in a sheltered corner of the field, and the light was streaming through one of its little windows. Near-by a horse was cropping the grass; and a little farther away were the blackened remains of a camp fire.

"Gipsies, I expect," said Wiggins to himself. "I'd better——"

Before he could say more the door of the caravan was opened and a boyish figure appeared at the top of the steps.

"Who goes there?" called out the boy, who had evidently heard the constable's approaching footsteps.

Wiggins advanced to the foot of the steps and surveyed the boy with critical eyes.

"You're not a gipsy, anyhow," he said.

The boy came down the steps and patted Wiggins on the back.

"Wot a brain!" he murmured in tones of mock admiration. "Wot does it feel like to be so clever?"

The constable frowned. He was not accustomed to be treated with such levity—and by a slip of a boy.

"You'd better keep a civil tongue in your head, or you'll find yourself in clink, my lad," he said severely. "To whom does this caravan belong?"

"To my guv'nor," replied the boy.

"And who's your guv'nor?"

"Mr. Martin Dale, of Jermyn Street, London," said the boy.

The constable's eyes grew as round as saucers.

"Martin Dale!" he gasped. "The great detective?"

The boy nodded.

"Then you—you——" stammered the astounded Wiggins, "you must be Jimmy!"

Again the boy nodded.

"Guessed it in once," he said. "Yes, I'm Jimmy right enough."

"Fancy that now!" said Wiggins. "I've often heard of you, of course, and Mr. Dale, too, but I never thought I'd have the luck to meet you. If it isn't a rude question, are you and Mr. Dale engaged on a case in this neighbourhood?"

"Oh, no," said Jimmy. "We're takin' a month's 'oliday, an' we're spendin' it in caravannin'. We've been wanderin' abaht the country in this caravan for ten days now, an' we're going to keep it up for another three weeks. Leastways," he added, "that's what we meant to do, but I dunno what'll happen now."

"Why," asked Wiggins.

"Well, it's like this," said Jimmy.

"We arrived 'ere abaht six o'clock this evenin', an' after we'd got permission to pitch our camp in this field, the guv'nor an' me walked on to the village to see if there was any letters waitin' for us at the post office. There wasn't no letters, but there was a telegram for the guv'nor, marked 'Urgent an' Himportant,' askin' 'm to come to London as quick as he could as they wanted to consult 'im 'abaht something at the War Office. It didn't say what they wanted to consult 'im abaht, but of course, he 'ad to go."

"Then Mr. Dale isn't here now?" said the disappointed Wiggins, who had hoped to get a sight of the great detective.

"No," said Jimmy. "He'd only just time to bolt from the post office to the station an' catch the last train to London. I should like to 'ave gone with 'im, but I 'ad to stay behind, of course, to look after the 'orse an' caravan."

"When is he coming back?" asked Wiggins.

"Dunno," said Jimmy. "It depends on wot they want 'im for at the War Office. He might be back to-morrer, or the next day, or he mightn't come back at all."

"Then you'll stay here, I suppose, until he either returns or sends word what you're to do?"

"Them's my orders," said Jimmy.

Wiggins asked a few more questions; and then, as he turned to leave, he pointed to the lighted window of the caravan.

"If you'll take my advice," he said, "you'll either put out that lamp, or hang a thick curtain over that window."

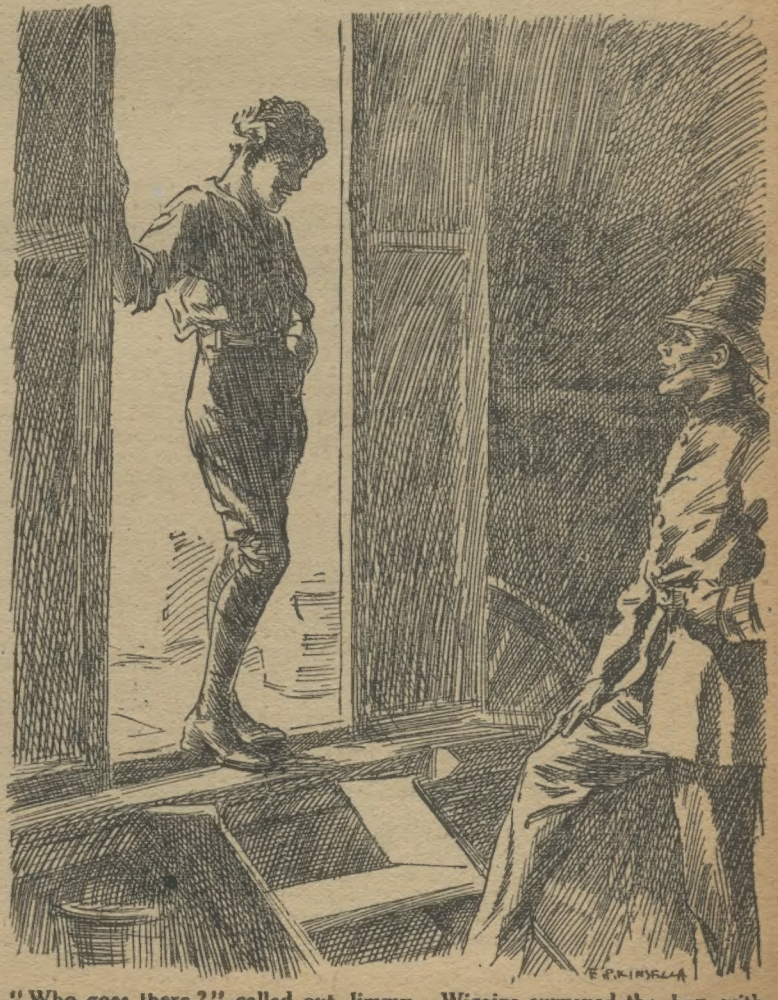
"Why?" asked Jimmy.

"Zeppelins!" said Wiggins. "I've just come from Highfield, and they've had word there from the Admiralty that German aircraft are approaching the north-east coast. All the public lights in the town have been extinguished, and my orders are to see that all the lights in my district are extinguished too."

"Thanks for the tip," said Jimmy "As I'd 'ate to 'ave a bomb drop on the caravan while the guv'nor is away I'll muffle the winder at once."

With this Wiggins bade him good night and took his departure; while Jimmy, re-entering the caravan, "muffled" the window with a rug, and then settled down to finish the book which he had been reading when the sound of the constable's footsteps had disturbed him.

For some reason or another, however, the book no longer interested him. His mood had changed. He felt restless and unsettled. Also, for the first time since Martin Dale had left him, he felt lonely and depressed. If anybody



"Who goes there?" called out Jimmy. Wiggins surveyed the boy with critical eyes

had told him he was feeling nervous, he would have indignantly denied the charge. And the charge would not have been true. He was not nervous, but all the same he was oppressed by that curious nerve-straining feeling which all of us have experienced at times—a feeling that "something was going to happen."

"I can't think wot's come over me to-night," he mused, as he tossed the book aside. "The best thing I can do, I think, is to go to bed."

He undressed and donned his pyjamas. He extinguished the lamp and had just climbed into the little bunk which served him for a bed when a muffled report, like the growl of distant thunder, reverberated through the air and rattled the windows of the caravan.

"That sounded uncommonly like a bomb!" he exclaimed, as he hurriedly climbed out of the bunk. "Ten to one the Zepps 'ave arrived."

He groped his way to the door, opened it and peered out into the dark, still night.

Suddenly another report was heard—louder and nearer this time—while at the same instant a flash of light, like summer lightning—lit up the sky in the direction of Highfield.

"It's a Zepp, an' no giddy herror!" muttered Jimmy. "I can 'ear the engine. I wonder which way it's——"

He broke off with a startled gasp; for at that moment the sounds of a furious struggle fell on his ears, while an instant later an anguished shout of "Help! Help! Help!" came pealing through the darkness.

## CHAPTER 2

### A Fight in the Dark

THE shout came from the direction of the road; and without a moment's hesitation Jimmy—who was barefooted and in his pyjamas—sprang down the steps of the caravan, raced across the field and vaulted over the gate.

It was very dark in the road, but Jimmy had eyes like a cat; and he quickly perceived two figures struggling on the ground a few yards from the gate. One of the figures was that of a man, and the other was that of a boy about Jimmy's own age. The boy was lying on his back, kicking and fighting, and the man was kneeling on his chest, with both hands gripping the boy's windpipe.

The man's back was turned towards Jimmy, and as Jimmy was barefooted the man neither saw him nor heard him vault over the gate. Taking advantage of these facts Jimmy darted down the road, leaped on the man from behind, seized him by the scruff of the neck, and dragged him backwards off the boy's chest. Then, as the man rolled over in the roadway, Jimmy threw himself on top of him and endeavoured to pin him down, while at the same time he called to the boy to come and help him to secure the man.

The boy, however, had evidently been half strangled, for he still lay on his back in the middle of the road, plucking at his throat and gasping for breath. And in the meantime the droning of the Zeppelin's engines grew louder and nearer every moment.

"'Urry up!" panted Jimmy, appealing to the boy. "I can't 'old 'im down much longer unless yer 'elp me."

The boy made a valiant effort and staggered to his feet. By that time, however, the man had regained his presence of mind, which had been dissipated by Jimmy's surprise attack; and before the boy could come to Jimmy's assistance, the man seized Jimmy by the throat, put forth all his strength and hurled him half-way across the road.

Jimmy bounded to his feet again like an indiarubber ball, and as the man also sprang to his feet Jimmy once more flung himself on him and wound his arms round the fellow's waist.

"'Elp me! 'Elp me!" he cried to the boy. "Pull 'is legs from under 'im!"

By this time the boy had recovered his wind, and, stimulated by Jimmy's example, he threw himself into the fray. For a few seconds the man reeled this way and that, with the two boys hanging on to him like limpets; then down he went, with his youthful assailants on top of him.

"Got 'im!" yelled Jimmy exultantly. "Sit on 'is 'ead! Catch 'old of that arm and stick to it like grim death! I'll sit on 'is legs and look after the other arm!"

Judging by the roar of its engines the Zeppelin was now immediately over their heads. But none of the three paid any attention to the airship. For a little while longer the man continued to struggle, but all his efforts to shake the boys off proved unavailing, and at last he ceased to resist and lay quite still.

"Now tell me all abaht it," said Jimmy, who was seated astride the man's legs, holding one of his arms in a vice-like grip. "Who is this bloke?"

"It was too dark to see his face, so I can't be certain," replied the boy, "but I've a shrewd suspicion that it's Major Vincent."

Jimmy was frankly surprised—not by what the boy said, but by the tone in which he said it. Dark as it was he could see that the boy was miserably clad, and apparently half starved; yet when he spoke, he spoke with the cultured accent of an English public schoolboy.

"An' who's Major Vincent when he's at 'ome?" asked Jimmy.

"That's a long story—too long to tell now," said the boy. "I'll tell it to you later if you care to hear it. In the meantime, what shall we do with this man?"

"Well," said the practical Jimmy, "it seems to me as the fust thing to be done is to see if he's the bloke you think he is. 'Ave yer got a flashlight on yer?"

"No," said the boy, "but I've a few loose matches in my waistcoat pocket."

"Then strike one of 'em," said Jimmy, "and let's 'ave a squint at 'is hugly mug!"

The boy fumbled in his pocket and drew out a match. But he never struck it, for at the same instant as he drew the match from his pocket the Zeppelin overhead released another bomb!

The bomb dropped into the field on the other side of the hedge. The moment it struck the ground the whole countryside was lit up by a blinding flash which was accompanied by a shattering roar. So violent was the concussion of the air produced by the explosion that the man and his youthful captors were literally blown across the road and hurled into the opposite hedge. Marvellous to relate, none of the three were seriously injured, but both Jimmy and the other boy were partially stunned by the shock and lay for several minutes too dazed to realise what had happened.

And when at last they collected their scattered wits and scrambled to their feet, they found that their prisoner had taken to his heels and was already out of sight.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Missing Will

THE boy was bitterly disappointed that the man had escaped, but Jimmy took the matter more philosophically.

"We've lost 'im, an' that's a fact," he said; "but instead of grousin' yer oughter be thankful that the bomb didn't drop on the top of us. But we're forgettin' our manners! Isn't it time we introjooced ourselves? My name's Jimmy Readman—wot's yours?"

"Philip Norwood," replied the boy; and then added, "I knew you were the famous Jimmy before you told me."

"Seen my photo in the papers, I s'pose," said Jimmy loftily.

"No, I can't say I have."

"Then 'ow did yer know who I was?"

"I was in the Barnby post office this evening when you and Mr. Dale called there to ask if there were any letters for you. I heard you say who you were, and I heard you say you were camping in Farmer Jackson's ten-acre pasture. As a matter of fact, I was coming to consult Mr. Dale when that scoundrel attacked me. Is it too late to consult him now?"

"It wouldn't be if he was 'ere, but he isn't," said Jimmy; and he explained how Martin Dale had been recalled to London.

"Then I'll have to wait till he returns," said Philip. "In the meantime if you care to hear my story——"

"Not 'ere," interrupted Jimmy, who had a shrewd suspicion that Philip had had very little to eat that day. "Come with me to the caravan, an' we'll share a pot of cocoa."

He led the way to the caravan, where, after lighting the oil stove and putting on the kettle, he produced the remains of a lunch tongue and a tin of biscuits.

"Not a word till we've got outside these," he said. "By the time you've polished 'em off I'll 'ave the cocoa ready; and then yer can jaw to yer 'eart's content."

A quarter of an hour later, over two mugs of steaming cocoa, Philip Norwood related his romantic story. He began with a question.

"Did you ever hear of old John Rudd, commonly known as the Mad Millionaire?" he asked.

"Never," said Jimmy. "Who is he, and where does he 'ang out?"

"He's dead now," said Philip. "He was a very wealthy man who lived at Carbrook Manor, on the outskirts of Highfield. He wasn't really a millionaire, but on account of his eccentric habits he was locally known as the Mad Millionaire. He was never married, and his only relative—whom he hated like poison—was a distant cousin, named Major Vincent, who was a drunkard and a gambler and an absolute blackguard in every respect.

"My father," he continued, "was head gamekeeper to Mr. Rudd; and when my father died, about six years ago, leaving me alone in the world and penniless, Mr. Rudd did the most eccentric thing he had ever done in all his life. To everybody's amazement, my own included, he announced his intention of adopting me and making me his heir."

"He must 'ave been very fond of yer," suggested Jimmy.

"Not at all," said Philip. "He grew to be very fond of me afterwards, I believe, but at the time he adopted me he hardly knew me."

"Then why did he adopt yer?"

"To spite Major Vincent. He was determined that the Major shouldn't touch a penny of his money, and he didn't fancy leaving it to a hospital, so he decided to adopt a boy and leave his fortune to him.

"As I've already told you," continued Philip, "he adopted me; and although I never saw a will, he told me scores of times that he had made a will, leaving everything to me when he died. At first he engaged a tutor for me, then he sent me to a good public school, and I was away at school when the crash came."

He paused, as if the recollection was too much for him, and several moments elapsed before he resumed his narrative.

"One day, about six months ago," he said, "Mr. Rudd and his valet, whose name was Leeming, were motoring to the station when the car collided with a dray. Mr. Rudd was killed on the spot, and Leeming was so terribly injured that for several weeks he hung between life and death. The butler wired the news to me, and I went down to the Manor by the next train. All the servants saluted me as their new master, but—but——" his voice broke—"a bitter awakening was in store for me."

Jimmy thought he could guess what was coming.

"Mr. Rudd 'ad died without makin' a will?" he suggested.

Philip shook his head.

"It's true that no will could be found," he said, "but he had told me scores of times, and he had told other people too, that he had willed all his possessions to me. It's also true that the family solicitor declared that he had never made any will for Mr. Rudd, but that's easily explained. Mr. Rudd evidently drew up the will himself without consulting the lawyer."

"Then why couldn't the will be found?"

"I've my own theory about that," said Philip. "As I've already told you, Mr. Rudd was a very eccentric man; and my belief is that he concealed the will somewhere at the Manor and forgot to tell anybody where he had concealed it. The servants at that Manor believe the same; but although we searched the house from basement to attics no trace of any will could be found.

"As soon as Major Vincent heard that no will could be found," he continued, "he

hurried down to the Manor and claimed the whole of the old man's estate as Mr. Rudd's next-of-kin. He ordered me to leave the house within half an hour, and, of course, I had to do so; so that once again I found myself alone in the world and penniless.

"Several of the villagers offered me a home," he went on, "but I couldn't impose on their charity, so I tramped to Middlesbrough and obtained a situation as junior clerk. Before I'd been there a week I fell ill with influenza; and as I'd no friends and no money I was taken to the workhouse infirmary. When I recovered I got a berth as deckhand aboard a steamer, but the vessel was sunk by a German submarine, and I was sent back to England with nothing to call my own except the clothes in which I stood. I then got the promise of another berth on another ship, which was due to sail in three weeks; and while I was waiting for it to sail I saw this advertisement in the *Yorkshire Post*."

He drew a newspaper cutting from his pocket and handed it to Jimmy. It read:

"PHILIP NORWOOD.—If the above, who used to live at Carbrook Manor, will call on the undersigned he will hear of something to his advantage.—Thos. Leeming, c/o R. Flegg, 16 Wharf Lane, Highfield."

"Leeming," said Jimmy. "That was the name of Mr. Rudd's valet, wasn't it?"

"Yes. He was injured at the same time that Mr. Rudd was killed, and when last I heard of him—before I saw this advertisement—he was still in hospital at Highfield. Since then he has left the hospital and gone to lodge at 16 Wharf Lane."

"When did you see the advertisement?"

"This afternoon. Before I tell you what I did, tell me what you think the advertisement means."

"At a guess, I should say it means that Leeming either knows or suspects where the will is 'idden and wants to tell yer."

"That's exactly what I thought myself, so I started out at once to walk to Highfield. On the way I called at the Barnby post office to cash a postal order for a shilling—which is all the money I have—and it was there I saw you and Mr. Dale and heard you say you were camping in this field. I then walked on to Highfield, found Wharf Lane, and knocked at the door of number sixteen. It was opened by one of the most villainous-looking ruffians I've ever seen, and as he opened the door I saw another man standing in the front passage. He darted into one of the rooms as soon as he saw me, but not before I had seen his face. It was Major Vincent!"

"The Major 'ad seen the advertisement too," Jimmy said, "and he 'ad gone to the 'ouse to find out wot Leeming wanted to tell yer. Would Leeming tell 'im?"

"I'm sure he wouldn't. Leeming was always a friend of mine, and he loathed the Major. No; Leeming would never tell the Major anything."

"That's all right then. Carry on."

"I asked the man who opened the door if he was Mr. Flegg, and he said he was. I then said I had called to see Leeming in reply to his advertisement. At first he denied that Leeming was there, but eventually he admitted he was, but he said he was dangerously ill and the doctor had forbidden him to see any visitors. I argued and insisted, but it was all in vain. He admitted that Leeming was in the house, but he absolutely refused to let me see him."

"That was the Major's doin'," suggested Jimmy. "He 'ad bribed Flegg not to let yer see Leeming."

"That's what I thought, and the thought made me lose my temper. I told Flegg that I knew the Major was there, and that he and the Major were in league against me. 'But I'll beat you both,' I said angrily. 'I happen to know that Martin Dale is camping in a field near Barnby. I shall go to him now and ask him to come back with me, and he'll jolly soon make you let me see Leeming.'"

"Yer dropped a brick there, old man!" he said. "Yer should never show yer cards to yer opponent! Yer should never have told 'im wot yer were goin' to do."

"That's what I ought to have done, of course," said Philip. "I see it now, but at the time I was too angry to think."

"Wot did Flegg say when you told 'im yer was goin' to consult the guv'nor?"

"I didn't give him time to say anything. I simply turned my back on him and started to walk back to Barnby. On reaching the gate of this field, I was about to open it when I heard a stealthy footstep behind me. I spun round and was just in time to see a shadowy figure leaping at me through the darkness. I closed with the man, and yelled for help."

Again Jimmy nodded.

"It was either Flegg or the Major," he said. "One of 'em must 'ave shaddered yer from Wharf Lane and tried to nobble yer in order to prevent yer cousultin' the guv'nor."

"It certainly wasn't Flegg," said Philip. "The man wasn't tall enough for Flegg. I'm pretty sure it was the Major, but as I never saw his face I can't prove it."

"Then wot are yer goin' to do abaht it?"

"What can I do?" asked Philip despairingly. "Now that Mr. Dale has returned to London, my last hope is gone."

"That isn't very flatterin' to me!" said Jimmy in an injured voice. "I 'aven't returned to London, yer know!"

"Do you mean," Philip said eagerly, "that you're willing to help me against the Major?"

"Of course I am," said Jimmy. "I'm just achin' to do a bit of detective work on my own. I don't pretend to be as clever as the guv'nor"—modest Jimmy!—"but at any rate I'll guarantee to keep the ball rolling till the guv'nor comes back. Is it a bargain?"

"Rather!" said Philip with sparkling eyes.

"That's settled then," said Jimmy. "You'll sleep 'ere to-night, of course, an' to-morrer mornin' we'll go to Wharf Lane an' interview Leeming—even if we 'ave to pull the 'ouse down to get at 'im!"

Half an hour later the two boys were fast asleep, neither of them dreaming what startling and perilous adventures the morrow held in store for them.

*(Another grand instalment next week.)*

# ICE VALLEY

*A Thrilling Story*

## By A Popular Author

TED, that fellow Griboux will bear watching."

Ned Daintrey, busy drying his socks over the fire of hemlock logs, looked up sharply.

"Bear watching. How do you mean, Wil? Old Man Monk trusted him. He never hinted that the chap was anything but straight."

Willoughby Kirke, a strapping young North-countryman, glanced across at the little, brown-faced half-breed, who was employed at the moment in feeding the team of sledge dogs with dried salmon. The row the huskies made as they each fought for his team-mate's share, made it unlikely that the man would overhear. All the same it was in a whisper that Kirke replied.

"No, I think Monk trusted him, and I believe he was square with Monk. But that's no reason why he should be square with us."

"What makes you think he's crooked?"

"I don't say he is. For all I know, it's just cold feet. But I've been watching him the last two days, and I'll swear there's something wrong."

Ned nodded. "It's a tough trail," he said thoughtfully. "And it's late in the season. If we get a big snow it might be ugly. I hardly blame Griboux if he is a bit scared."

"It is tough," allowed young Kirke, "and we'd never have tried it if it hadn't been for what Monk told us about his big find. I wish he could have come with us."

"He was mad to come," said Daintrey. "It was only that poisoned foot stopped him." He paused.

"All right, Will," he went on presently. "We'll watch Griboux. It won't do to run risks, with a chance like this ahead of us."

At that moment Griboux turned back towards the fire, and the two white men said no more. But both did a deal of thinking. As Daintrey had said, this was the chance of a lifetime. He and Kirke had been for a year in the Upper Klondike and done no good at all. Then one night an old prospector, Jabez Monk by name, stumbled into their shanty, dead beat, and in agony with a poisoned foot.

He had met the two youngsters before and knew they were straight, so when he was able to talk he told them his story.

Up on Lone Mountain, two hundred miles to the north-east, he had stumbled on places of incredible richness. Not dust, like most of the Northern gold, but nuggets. He showed them a bag full. Some weighed as much as five ounces apiece.

"I got that lot in three days," he told them. "Then grub ran out, and we had to start back. I meant to go up again right away, but this here foot is going to hang me up for a month, and I don't want to risk someone else following my trail. You two can take my breed and get right along up there, and it's halves in anything you bring back."

Who would not have jumped at such a chance? Kirke and Daintrey did, and though the first snow was due anywhere within the next three weeks, they were off hot foot, eager to get on the track of the gold.

On the evening when they had this conversation they had been travelling for six days, and reckoned they were within fifty miles of their destination.

Learning from Old Monk's experience, they made a cache halfway, where they had stored a week's provisions. This gave them a sort of link with home, so that, if things went wrong, they would have something to fall back upon on their way south.

Griboux was a clean-faced, swarthy man, almost as silent as an Indian. He came back to the fire, sat down without a word, pulled out his pipe, filled it and began to smoke. Daintrey, watching the man covertly, wondered what Griboux was thinking of, but the breed's face was like that of a stone image. He could get no clue. The north wind blew bitter cold, and he shivered even in his furs. He threw another armful of wood on the fire, and wrapping his blankets round him, said good night to Kirke and lay down to sleep.

Dead tired with his long day's march, he slept like a log. It was not until someone shook him sharply by the shoulder that he awoke, to find himself and his blankets covered with snow.

"Hallo!" he said drowsily. "Come at last, has it?"

Will Kirke's voice answered him, sharp and bitter.

"'Come'! 'Gone,' you'd better say. Griboux has slipped out in the night and taken the dogs with him."

Ned Daintrey was up like a shot.

"The hound!" he cried. "The treacherous hound! What about the grub, Will? Is that gone too?"

"Every blamed thing!" snapped Kirke harshly. "Ned, I ought to be shot. Sleeping like I did after I told you I knew he was crooked."

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